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NIZAMI GANJAVI

Poet, 1141-1209

AZERBAIJANI LITERATURE



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Nizami Ganjavi

Nizami Ganjavi, the genius poet and thinker of Azerbaijan was born in 1141 in Ganja, Azerbaijan, spent all his life in this city and never left it. He died on March 12, 1209 in Ganja.

Nizami is famous as a thinker who brought new ideas and thoughts to the history of world culture, enriched the form and content of the Eastern poetry, created the magnificent pieces of Renaissance literature.

Nizami got his primary education in *madrasahs* (religious school) of Ganja. Then he started to study the sciences through perusal. He was well aware of folklore and written literature of Middle East. His poems are obvious evident that being fluent in Turkish, Arabic and Persian languages, the poet also mastered Greek language, ancient Greek history and philosophy, astronomy, medicine and geometry. Approximately in 1170 Seyfaddin Muzaffar, the ruler of Darband sent Nizami a slave girl as a gift. The poet married to this slave – Kypchak girl Afag and in 1174 his son Muhammad was born.



Nizami Museum in Ganja



Nizami Museum in Ganja

Nizami Ganjavi started his creative activity with lyrical poems. His poems make clear that he wrote voluminous *divan* (collection of lyrical poems) and gained fame as an author of *ghazals* (lyrical poems with specific verse) and *gasidahs* (odes). A few poems were saved to us from his *divan*, which is stated by eastern memoirists to consist of 20,000 *beyts* (distiches).



The bust of Nizami Ganjavi in Ganja





The mosaic of "Sultan Sanjar and old woman" in Nizami metro station, Baku

Nizami Ganjavi entered the history of world literature as the author of *Khamasa* ("Quinary") consisting of 5 epic poems written in *masnavi* style (double-rhymed verses). *Mahzan Al-Asrar* ("Treasure of Mysteries") that he wrote in 1177 made the poet very famous. In 1180 he finished "Khosrov and Shirin" that he wrote by the order of Togrul III, ruler of Atabegs and sent to Muhammad Jahan Pahlavan. According to the historical facts, Gizil Arslan who ascended the throne after the death of Jahan Pahlavan met with the poet in his tent near Ganja, listened to his morals and donated the village of Hamdunyan to the poet.

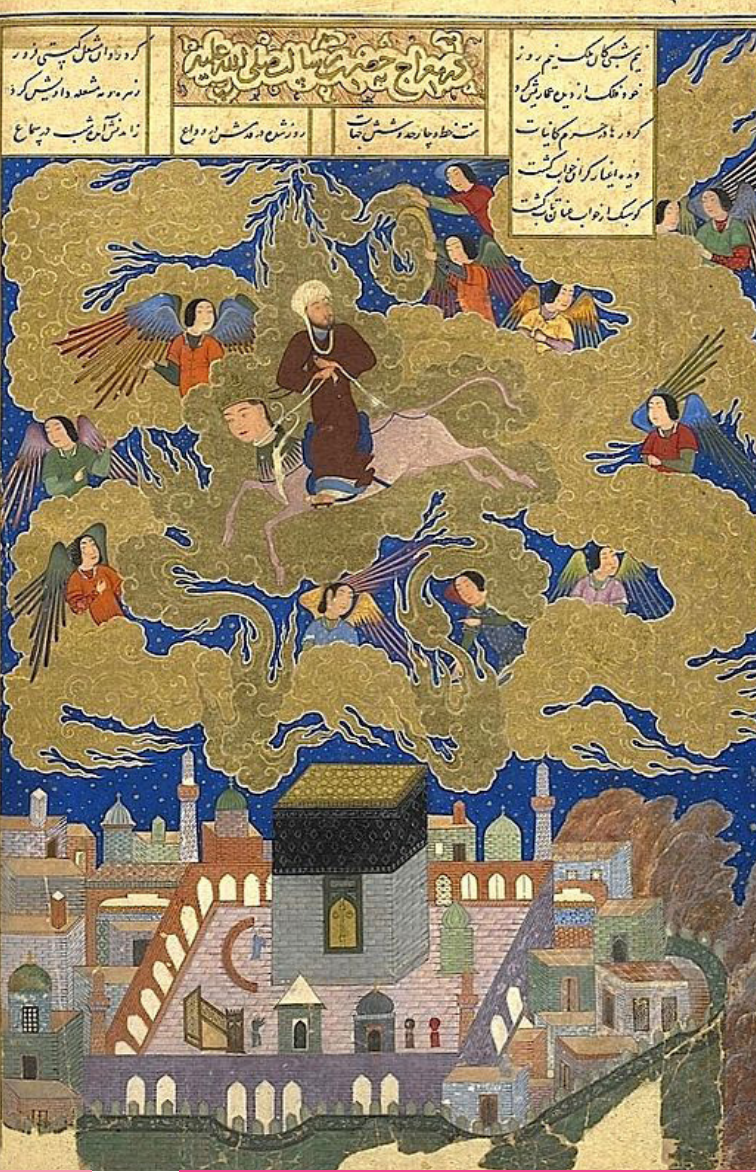


*The bas-relief for "Treasure of Mysteries"
by Nizami.*



*The art painted on "Leyli and Majnun"
by Nizami*





در هجرت حضرت محمد صلی الله علیه و آله
 روز شنبه در مدینه مشرف و دواع
 مستطاب و پاره و دشمن تمام

نیم شبی که یک نیم روز
 خود فلک از زمین عاری گرد
 کرد و با همه کائنات
 دیده ایستاد که از خواب بیدار گشت
 که یک خواب غمازی گشت

کرد ز او آن مثل پستی زود
 ز سر برود شده و او پیش کرد
 ز آمدن آن شب در سماع

*The miniature painted on Khamsa by
 Nizami (1494/5)
 Preserved in British Museum.*

In 1188, Akhsitan I, the ruler of Shirvan assigned the poet to write in the theme of “Leyli and Majnun”. Although Nizami Ganjavi was going to refuse, he accepted it at his son’s insistence and the epic poem “Leyli and Majnun” first time in the East was written within a short period. In 1196 he finished “Seven beauties” in honor of Alaeddin Alrslan Little, and finally, towards the end of his life he wrote “Isgandarnameh” (appr. in 1209) summarizing all his literary and aesthetic, philosophical visions.



Nizami Museum in Ganja



The miniature painted for "Treasure of Mysteries" by Nizami. "Fair Nushiravan and vizier"



Nizami's "Treasury of Mysteries" poem
 "The story of two rival scholars", the
 Safavid period of the manuscript

Nizami Ganjavi wrote both in epic and lyric style. All his poems in hand are in Persian. 6 *gasidahs*, 120 *ghazals*, 30 *rubais* and *Khamasa* from his rich literary heritage survived up to date. The distinctive features of poet's *ghazals* are secularism and glorification of the real love. The author of first *Khamasa* ("Quinary") in Azerbaijani literature is Nizami Ganjavi. He wrote only in Arud verse.

“Khamsa” had been completed in 30 years. The first poem “Treasure of Mysteries” has not a single plot and protagonist. Pursuant to epic poem tradition, the introduction part consists of Prophet’s Ascension and panegyric of the ruler. The basic text of the poem includes twenty *megalets* (a kind of ancient philosophical article) and twenty narrations focusing on various public, philosophical, religious problems. The idea of justice is the leading subject.



*The miniature painted on “Treasure of Mysteries”
by Nizami. The Story of Prophet Jesus*



*Khosrov sees bathing Shirin, appr. 1720-1740,
Indian school
The miniature painted on "Khosrov and Shirin"
by Nizami.*



In “Khosrov and Shirin” Nizami used different sources, legends about Khosrov and Shirin, historical monuments, *Shahnameh* (“Book of Kings”) by Firdowsy and created specific plot. The poem is about love affair of Khosrov Parviz, Sassanid’s king and Shirin, Azerbaijani-turkish princess. The events basically take place in Azerbaijan and its capital city of Barda. The Persian and Turkish ethics is opposed in the poem and absolute preference is gained by Turkish ethics. Light-natured Khosrov changes under the moral impact of Shirin and becomes man of integrity. The poet believes that the salvation of humanity is in compliance with Turkish justice principles and ethic codes. The poem also focuses on the issue of woman freedom. “Khosrov and Shirin” is the first voluminous literary work in the theme love in the Literature of Near East. It’s also considered the first poem having single plot for profound description of events and first poetic novel in Azerbaijani literature.



*Khamseh (Quintel) of Nizami Afghanistan,
Herat, 1524-1525*

“Leyli and Majnun”, the basic theme of which is love, was written based on ancient Arabic legend. Here also the problem of woman freedom is in the center of plot. Nizami’s woman heroes, including Leyli don’t cover their face from men, go out without veil and they are free. The poet calls them “Turks in Arabic attire”. The poem has a tragic end as it is in the legend – both heroes die.



Nizami carpet



Ilham Aliyev, the president of Azerbaijan Republic in front of Mausoleum of Nizami Ganjavi in Ganja

The hero of fourth poem – “Seven beauties” is Bahram Gur, the 5th century Sassanid king . Nizami preferred to impact political events and human destiny, to evoke humane feelings of reader by depicting rulers of his imagination rather than historical ones. Featuring the positive aspects of the past enabled the poet to invoke the kings to be fair.



"In the Light of Nizami" – the oil painting on canvas made in 1987 by Vagif Ujatay, the Azerbaijani

Nizami summarized his 30-years scientific and literary research with the poem "Iskandarnameh" (Poem of Iskandar – Alexander the Great). The human problems are in the core of the poem. Regardless the historical theme of the poem, the poet used the history as a facade describing Iskandar's conquering accomplishments only in two or three pages. In the "Reason of Narration" Nizami writes how Iskandar visits Darkness after water of immortality and fails to get it, only upon ending "Iskandarnameh" he could reach the water.



*The Story of Sultan Sanjar and Old Woman,
1539-1543, British library, London*



*The Museum named Nizami Ganjavi
in Baku*



*The monument of "Bahran Gur" character
from "Seven Beauties" by Nizami in Azneft
Square of Baku. This monument was built
up by three sculptors – Albert Mustafayev,
Gorkhmaz Sujaddinov and Aslan Rustamov*



“Iskandarnameh” can be considered the pinnacle of Nizami’s creativity. He completed his creativity of long years in this poem with romantic epilogue and made a moral will for future generations resuming his thoughts and conclusions. The poet thinks, the power of this epos is in its pure narration without any lie and in its nature full of love. Nizami could reveal different types of political, ethical and moral problems by depicting his time in this poem. All these peculiarities make “Iskandarnameh” the superior pinnacle of 12th century Azerbaijani Renaissance literature and culture.



*The monument of Nizami Ganjavi
in Baku*



“Fitna” composition dedicated to “Seven Beauties” poem by Nizami

Nizami Ganjavi is patriotic poet. He tried to associate all events with Azerbaijan and to glorify past days of his motherland. The love to motherland depicted on Nizami’s activity combines with idea of heroism for nation.

Art of Nizami – one of the magnificent miracles of world culture history is the peak of integrity and wisdom. His creative activity had a great impact on the development of literature of Caucasus and Middle East with its humane values and superior mastership and entered the treasure of world culture. More than 40 *nazirahs* (imitative poem) of Nizami’s poems had been written as of 13th century.



*Nizami metro station of
Baku metropolitan railway*

Nizami's literary activity influenced West European culture, too. The traces of this impact are obvious in "Ameto" by G.Boccacio, "Turandot" by C.Gozzi, "Princess of China" by A.LeSage and "l'Envieux" ("Envious Man") by Voltaire.



The Story of Tyrant and the Old Man Speaking Truth. Miniature

Nizami Ganjavi's works are translated into a great deal of languages. The rare manuscript samples of these works are preserved as a precious literary heritage in the famous libraries, museums and manuscript funds of Moscow, St.Petersburg, Baku, Tashkent, Tabriz, Tehran, Cairo, Istanbul, Delhi, London, Paris and etc.

A magnificent mausoleum was built in honor of Nizami Ganjavi in the city of Ganja, Azerbaijan, where he had been buried.



Nizami Street in Baku

One of the districts both in Ganja and Baku, the Museum of Azerbaijan Literature, the Institute of Literature of ANAS, Cinema Center, one of the metro stations and a number of other places were named after Nizami.

In 1946 the monument of poet was built up first time in Ganja and a year after in Baku (sculptor: F.Addurrahmanov), Luxembourg, Rome, Chişinău, Tashkent, Tabriz, Moscow, St.Petersburg, Cheboksary and in most cities of Azerbaijan. The books about him in Russian, English, German, Turkish and Persian, a novel ("Sword and Quill" by M.S.Ordubady), a play ("Nizami" by M.Huseyn), a poem ("Nizami Ganjavi" by B.Azeroglu) were written, an opera ("Nizami" by A.Badalbayly), a symphony ("In Commemoration of Nizami" by F.Amirov), a ballet ("Nizami" by F.Amirov) were composed, one feature film and 5 documentaries have been shot. 4 films based on the motives of poet's works have been shot. The operas ("Khosrov and Shirin" by Niyazi, "Slavic beauty" by B.Asafyev), ballet ("Seven beauties" by G.Garayev), symphonies ("Leyli and Majnun" by G.Garayev, "Khosrov and Shirin" by B.Zeidman), songs and romances of poems have been composed.

The leading figures of world literature Alishir Navai, Amir Khosrov Dahlavi, Fuzuli, Essar Tabrizi, Abdurrahman Jami, Goethe, Heinrich Heine, Johanne Hammer and others highly appreciated Nizami in their literary works.

The life and creative activity of N.Ganjavi has profoundly been studied, a number of monumental research works have been produced. The scientists such as A.Y.Krimsky, Y.E.Bertels, Y.N.Marr, H.Arasly have significant merit in this regard.



Ilham Aliyev, the president of Azerbaijan Republic visits the grave of Nizami



The gold coin dedicated to the memory of Nizami Ganjavi

*Appreciative statements
about Nizami Ganjavi:*

“Nizami Ganjavi is such a great personality and genius that his jubilees should be celebrated annually, but not once in five or ten years.”

*Haydar Aliyev
Nationwide leader of Azerbaijani people*

“Nizami, the genius of poetry chose the finest lines of subtlest love strands as a theme of his works. Nizami’s poems are incredibly perfect, distinct and varied.”

*Goethe
German poet and dramatist*

“The history of humankind and whole world hasn’t ever bestowed any other poet as powerful as Nizami.”

*N.Y.Marr,
Orientalist, linguist*

“Nizami was not only a great master of word, but also warrior of happy future. He was genius, great humanist and proper poet of people in the best sense of the word”

*Y.E. Bertels,
Russian orientalist*

"Nizami's ideal was the personality of perfect (complete) man, free man, socially superior and holy man. Nizami, the poetic genius has been illuminating our world up to date as a sun rising in the sky of Azerbaijani poetry."

*I.S. Braginsky,
Orientalist*

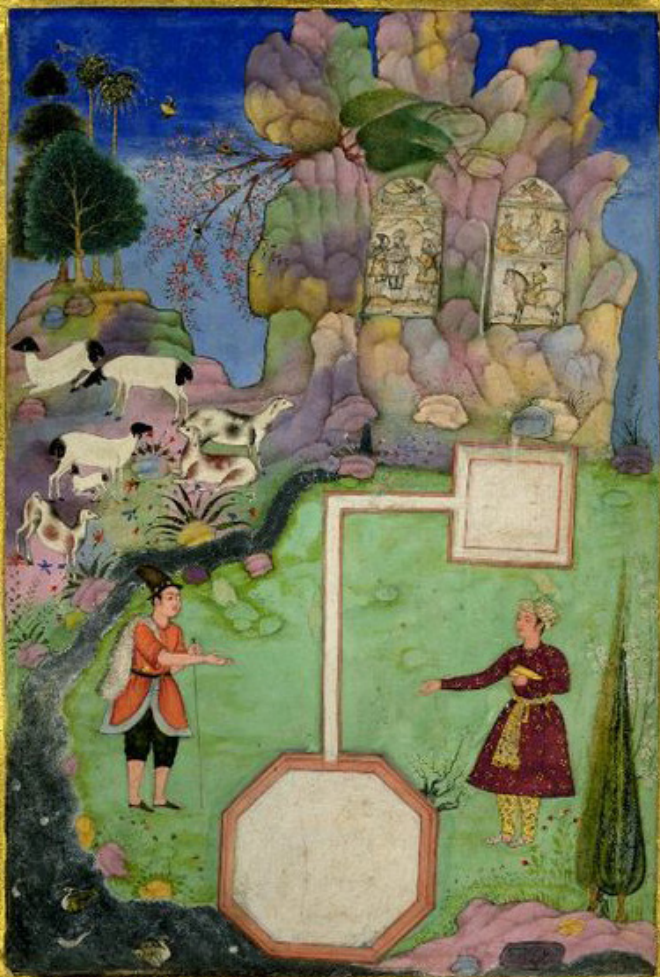


*The monument of Nizami Ganjavi
built up in 1946
Sculpted by: Fuad Abdurrahmanov*

A means of masking suffering, a way
Of bearing torture such as might betray
The stoutest heart?...” Leili in speaking thus,
Sought no relief, no help: the frivolous
And lovely butterfly knew of no balm
To soothe her spirit and to bring it calm.
It was to Heaven that the maid addressed
Her plea... With clouded eye and heaving breast,
When out her den the furtive moon did creep
And float above the sands, and buried deep
In slumber was the household, she would sigh
And pray for strength. Alone the moon and sky
Her secret heard. For she, so full of pride,
In none but them dared openly confide.

Translated by *Írina Zheleznova*



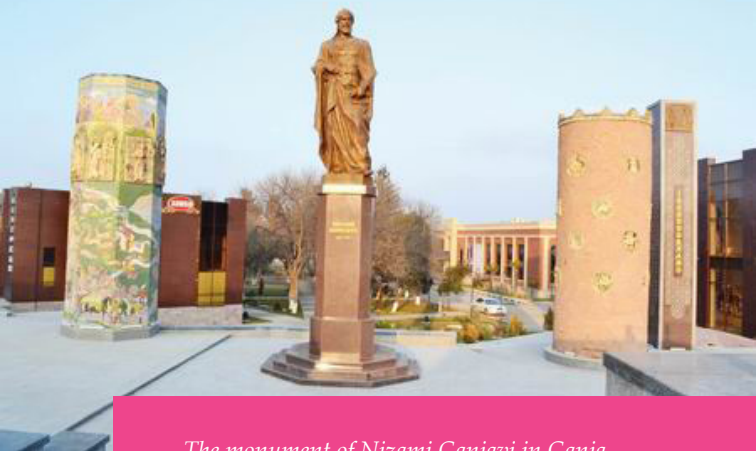


*Farhad presents Shirin his milk aryk, appr.
1610, Moghul school, British Museum*



*Nushaba, the ruler of Barda from
"Iskandarnamah" poem by Nizami Ganjavi
Painted by: Aynur Sultanli*





The monument of Nizami Ganjavi in Ganja



Nizami Mausoleum in Ganja





The monument of Nizami Ganjavi in Rome



*The painting dedicated to "Seven Beauties"
poem by Nizami Ganjavi
Painted by: Aynur Sultanli*

